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Dewan Brown (left) and Corey Hines check out a part of Orinly Drive in the Acme-Delco area that was washed away by the torrential rains of Hurricane Floyd.

Athletic fields suffer minor damage from the storm, but most Friday night high school games are likely to be postponed 1C

Looking good

Sunny with a high in the upper 70s. Clear tonight with a low in the mid-50s. Mostly sunny Saturday.

Complete forecast on 10A

Morning Star

Established in 1867 / Volume 132, Number 290

Friday, September 17, 1999

Wilmington, N.C.

50¢ Home delivery 30¢

Floyd brings floodgates



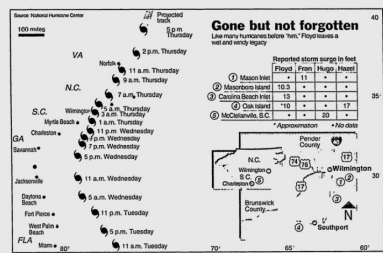
Penny Gains and Matt Hoffmann, who rode out Hurricane Floyd at their Oak Island home, walk through storm debris that littered East Beach Drive on Thursday.

Heavy flooding clogs roadways

By BRIAN FEAGANS

If there's a door to heaven, Hurricane Floyd had the key. The tropical storm opened up the heavens this week, dumping 15.06 inches of rain on Wilmington. Its legacy was simple: flooding. Water reached areas even old-timers had never seen inundated before. Head-tail floodwaters Thursday flitted with street signs in low-lying areas, tore apart secondary roads and left some major arteries passable only by boat. As residents of Ridgewood, Acme and Delco in Columbus County fled rising waters, one family in Leland was literally jammed out windows to avoid being swamped in their home. Early analysis indicates the outer rain bands of Floyd got caught in a cold front hovering right over the Cape Fear coast, producing continuous downpours while the eye was still off Florida.

"We were caught in the cyclonic flow and we never got a break as FLOODING on page 4A



Mighty waves beat up on Oak Island

By CECE von KOLNITZ

OAK ISLAND — Hurricane Floyd's devastating 15-foot storm surge damaged or destroyed hundreds of houses on this community's oceanfront and flattened its roadways. The town officials surveyed the damage Thursday and were startled by the sight of crumpled houses, exposed septic tanks and debris covering a sand-filled beach drive. "All the damage we sustained was done by storm surge. We had no significant wind damage," said Co-Mayor Juan Altman. "The lack of a frontal dome destroyed our first row."

"It looks like a war zone. It just makes you want to sit down and cry," said resident Joyce Odell. "It just makes you want to sit down and cry." Mrs. Odell picked up a piece of framed cross-stitch from the wreckage of a destroyed house. "At least if we find the owner, she'll have something we can give her," she said. Houses were estimated at more than \$100 million, Ms. Altman said. All beach accesses were destroyed, including the popular Cabana on the oceanfront. "Our public beach access program is gone," Ms. Altman said. The Ocean Crest and Long Beach areas were wiped out, with only small sections left Thursday. Most houses on the oceanfront are rented to



A house lies destroyed on the oceanfront off a sand-covered Caswell Beach Drive in Oak Island.

4A WILMINGTON MORNING STAR / FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1999

HURRICANE FLOYD: THE AFTERMATH

Floyd

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in four seasons — the second this year. Hurricane Dennis flitted with the Cape Fear coast and passed at the Outer Banks 19 days ago. Hurricanes Bertha and Fran visited in 1996 and Bonnie caused damage in late summer 1998.

The first tally of Floyd's damage in New Hanover County was put at \$247 million, but emergency officials had only been able to visit 15 percent of the county. The complete assessment will take three more days, county emergency management officials said. High water kept officials from checking any part of the county east of Carolina Beach Road south of Monkey Junction. Several subdivisions, mostly clustered in the northern and southern extremes of the county, were isolated.

We've got additional waterfront property," said Carolina Beach Mayor Ray Rothrock, trying to break two days of tension with humor. A curfew remained in place in Wilmington as well as beach communities in New Hanover County. City police said they would make a priority of 911 calls and urged motorists to use extreme courtesy while venturing through uncontrolled intersections.

City officials will be open today, but county offices and courts — which sustained as yet unassessed water damage — will be closed. Shelters at Junior Elementary and Trunk Middle schools remain open. New Hanover County public school students do not have classes today.

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington said it would resume classes on Monday. Property damage assessments will continue across the region today and will be aided by dry sunny weather.

On Oak Island, property manager Phil White lamented the storm severely damaged his livelihood. "Probably right now I'm close to being broke," said Mr. White, who manages 120 vacation homes on the island. "That's the way it goes."

Mr. White, president of Ocean 1 Realty, tried to keep his sense of humor. "You have to laugh," he said. "I cried this morning when I got the first report."

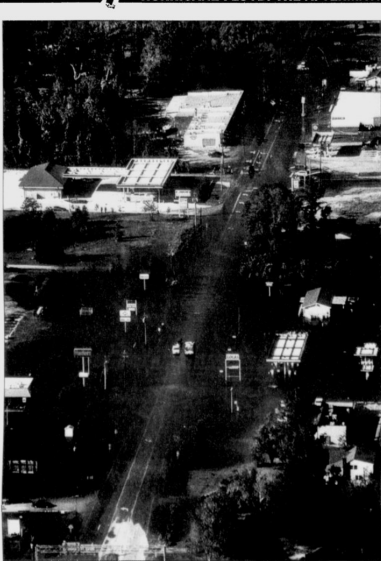
Staff writers Brian Feagans, Betty Fennell and Cece von Kolnitz contributed to this report.

Flooding

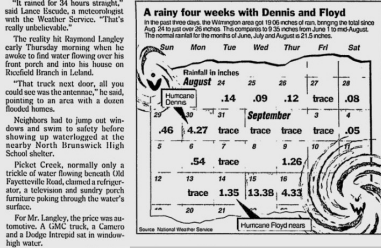
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break," said Tom Matheson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Wilmington. That translated into much more rain a lot earlier than with the approaches of hurricanes Bertha, Fran and Bonnie. Floyd reinforced the story Hurricane Mitch told in Central America last year — rain is often a hurricane's most powerful punch. "When people think of wind," Mr. Matheson said, "but hurricanes are all about water. It just doesn't get the respect — the water."

The storm won't be a Rodney Dangerfield in the record books, however. Wednesday's 13.38-inch rainfall was the most for any single day in Wilmington since data collection began in 1874. And in the 24-hour period that began at 3 a.m. Wednesday, the Wilmington airport got a record 15.06 inches, shattering the previous mark of 9.52 inches set on Sept. 29, 1938.



Castle Hayne is flooded after Hurricane Floyd dumped a record amount of rain on the Wilmington area. Many streets in the region were impassable in the storm's wake.



Waves

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vacationers. Real estate agents were notifying property owners, many of whom were farther inland Thursday, about the extent of the damage. A house managed by Phil White called Spoils of Victory was destroyed. "I understand that it's gone," Mr. White said. "I haven't been able to see it so far."

On the other side of the island, along the Intracoastal Waterway and in the middle area, residents experienced little damage except for tree debris.

Lennie Jackson, who has a two-story house once on the second row, said he had no idea the storm surge had done that much damage.

The apartment he rents in the bottom of his house was under a foot of water Thursday. "I guess she's going to start looking for another place to live," Mr. Jackson said of his renter.



A car sits stalled on Interstate 40 at the Burgaw-Jacksonville exit. The freeway was closed to traffic.

Worst flooding within memory, Gov. Hunt says

By PAUL NOWELL

KINSTON — Hurricane Floyd's floodwaters swallowed up hundreds of homes in the region and closed scores of highways, creating a devastating crisis throughout North Carolina's coastal plain. "We have seen the worst flooding in anybody's memory," said Gov. Jim Hunt.

President Clinton declared the eastern two-thirds of North Carolina a disaster area. The huge storm barreled ashore early Thursday at Oak Island, demolishing a dozen beachfront homes, and then dashed northward. While not inflicting the terrible water damage many had predicted, Floyd drenched a 50-mile-by-100-mile swath along Interstate 95 to 12 to 15 inches of rain.

Flooding was so bad up and down I-95 that in Nashville, National Guard troops used helicopters and even jet skis to rescue stranded residents. Kinston residents paddled bus boats to retrieve belongings from their mobile homes. In Tarboro, an appeal went out for boats to rescue about 100 people stranded in a subdivision.

Gov. Hunt said 85 roads were covered with water, and the worst flooding east of Tarboro along the Tar River. The U.S. Geological Survey said the Tar already had risen above 30 feet, five feet higher than the record peak set during Hurricane Fran in 1996. It was expected to go higher still. The Neuse River also was expected to exceed flood stage by double-digit figures.

Gov. Hunt and public safety secretary Richard Moore said hundreds of homes were flooded. From Tarboro to Rocky Mount, everything is underwater as far as the eye could see, said Moore. "People have lost everything they had in those houses," he said. "We really have an awful lot of flooding and an awful lot of people hurt," the governor said.

Mr. Moore said 2,250 National Guardsmen were to report for duty Thursday night and that another 1,200 would be called up today. Around the state, 140 shelters remained open, about 93 fewer than Wednesday night, he said. Parts of both I-40 and I-95, the state's two major thoroughfares, were closed. Heavy flooding was reported in Goldsboro, Rocky Mount, Wilson, Kinston, Tarboro and Kenly. In Kenly, the long-lying Bonifant County community that usually floods during hurricanes, waters were especially high. "I'm usually back here in business in about two days. It will be longer this time," druggstore owner Bud O'Neal said. Many believed it could have been far, for worse. Floyd, at one time peaking 155-mph winds, was called the storm of the decade. More than 20,000 people evacuated the barrier islands as it approached. Shelters took in 37,000. A flooded creek in Goldsboro cut the city in half. Streets and highways were closed from Hartnett County to the coast. At the edge of Wilson, N.C., 58 was closed because a bridge over a stream was underwater. In Raleigh, low-lying areas in the heart of the city were flooded. All railroads in Halifax County were closed. Curfews were announced in many cities in the coastal plain.